

KC Weed News – December 2006

King County, Washington

(<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/Weeds/kcweednews.htm>)

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Weed of the Month: English Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

(<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/weeds/holly.htm>)



In honor of the Christmas spirit, I hesitated to feature English Holly as the December Weed of the Month, in spite of the obvious connection. Holly's red berries and beautiful, glossy green leaves definitely evoke warm, holiday cheer for many of us. Unfortunately, we are also becoming all too familiar

with seeing this plant along hiking trails and in out-of-the-way forests. Sadly, English holly is beginning to represent something much less warm and fuzzy than it used to, at least in this part of the world. Although there isn't consensus about the level of threat posed by this popular European tree to our region, there is clear evidence that English holly is spreading beyond where it is planted (with help from birds, of course) and is able to reproduce in the wild. According to the USDA distribution map

(<http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ILAQ80>),

English holly is reported as naturalized in Washington, Oregon, California, and Hawaii. Here in Washington, holly is limited to mostly western counties. There is

something about our climate that English holly thrives on, and our forests are clearly vulnerable to its establishment.



Large English holly tree in Stimpson Family Nature Reserve in Whatcom County

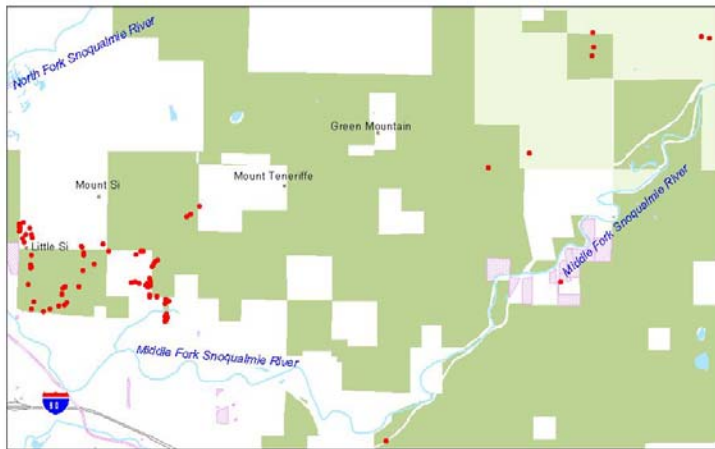
According to the University of Washington Herbarium records

(<http://biology.burke.washington.edu/herbarium/imagecollection.php?Genus=Ilex&Species=aquifolium>), botanists have collected specimens of English holly from naturalized populations in 17 western Washington counties, including King County. Collected plants have varied from immature plants to tall trees, and both male and female plants have been found. In some cases, the holly was growing as a single tree or in small, patchy populations, but in other cases, there were substantial populations noted that included a range of ages from seedlings to fruiting trees. The locations of the collections also ranged from urban to rural, sometimes near where people probably planted it intentionally, but also in areas far from any intentional plantings, most likely brought there by birds. Many of the records indicate that English holly was naturalized at the site and growing with mostly native Washington forest species or a mix of native and non-

native plants. It does appear that English holly is encroaching into native forest habitat and reproducing successfully in fairly undisturbed native communities.

Two other sources of data have shown similar situations. In the Seattle Urban Nature Project's (<http://www.seattleurbannature.org/>) plant inventory of Seattle's public forests, English holly was found in the understory of many of Seattle's forests. In fact, English holly was the fourth most abundant non-native species found, outnumbered only by Himalayan blackberry, Scotch broom and English ivy. English holly, along with English laurel, was more common in the understory than native evergreen trees. Given their findings, it is likely that English holly, along with other invasive non-natives, will be in a much better position to replace Seattle's aging deciduous trees than our native evergreen trees. Seattle Urban Nature ecologist Ella Elman predicts that, if nothing is done, 30 or 40 years from now Seattle's forests will look dramatically different than they do today.

Disturbing as this is, it is not too surprising to see a commonly planted ornamental escaping into urban parks. However, what is more alarming is the encroachment of English holly into rural and natural forests in King County. The Middle Fork Snoqualmie invasive plant inventory



**2006 Invasive English Holly Populations
Middle Fork Snoqualmie River Basin**

Data Provided by Mountains to Sound Greenway

Legend
● English Holly
— Rivers
— Lakes
— Mt Baker Snoqualmie
— National Forest
— King County Land
— WDFW Lands

recently undertaken by the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust

(<http://www.mtsgreenway.org/>) discovered significant populations of English holly in the forests of the watershed, particularly in the State DNR lands on the western edge, but also farther up in the watershed away from any residential properties. There doesn't seem to be a limit to how far into a forest holly can penetrate and it seems very well suited to our climate and our soils. Fortunately, most populations in the watershed are scattered at this point and it is probably not too late to stop them from spreading much further.

Unfortunately, each holly plant presents considerable challenges to removal. From personal experience, digging up even a small holly tree is extremely labor-intensive and results in considerable soil disturbance if all of the roots are removed. Cutting holly at the base usually results in re-sprouting from the crown, and spraying with herbicide is not very effective due to the thick, waxy leaves, although cut stump or frilling methods work fairly well. The best approach is to find holly when the plants are still young and easier to dig up. However, given holly's ability to move deep into natural forests, this means that we all need to be on the lookout when we are out hiking or exploring. If we see a large population of holly or isolated plants growing deep inside natural areas, then we should contact the public agency managing that forest. Of course, given everyone's limited resources, it may not be possible to remove the holly right away, but if resources do become available, knowing where to go to find these pioneering populations will be very important.

It is important to stress that English holly is produced and sold in Washington and Oregon and there are no regulations or limits on its sale or use in landscaping. In addition, English holly is not listed as a noxious weed in Washington or Oregon. In King County, we consider English holly to be a Weed of Concern (<http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/weeds/weedlist.cfm?class=O>) and we recommend that it is removed as part of restoration projects and where it is encroaching into natural forests. Also, our program doesn't track populations of English holly at this time.

For suggested alternatives to English Holly in landscaping, see the Garden Wise booklet, available for download at <http://www.invasivespeciescoalition.org/GardenPlants/index.html> or by contacting our office at 206-296-0290 or noxious.weeds@metrokc.gov (it is currently being reprinted but we expect to have copies early in 2007). You can also check out an article on holly from the Tacoma News Tribune that coincidentally came out the same day as this newsletter (December 1): <http://www.thenewstribune.com/soundlife/story/6250695p-5456302c.html>.

If you would like more information on identifying English holly, there are many resources online that describe the plant and provide pictures, for instance Oregon State University (<http://oregonstate.edu/dept/ldplants/2plants.htm#ilag>), English Country Garden (<http://www.english-country-garden.com/trees/holly.htm>), and Weeds of Blue Mountains Bushland (http://www.weedsbluemountains.org.au/english_holly.asp.) If you have any questions about English holly, please feel free to contact me at sasha.shaw@metrokc.gov or 206-296-0290.

King County Weed Board to meet with Agriculture Commission

It is well known that noxious weeds impact agriculture by lowering productivity and increasing costs. One of our program's primary goals is to reduce this impact of noxious weeds on King County Agriculture, especially by preventing the spread of new and damaging noxious weeds into agricultural areas and by developing Best Management Practices for controlling noxious and invasive weeds. In order to share ideas and concerns about noxious weeds and agriculture in the county, the King County Noxious Weed Control Board will be holding a joint meeting with the King County Agriculture Commission. The meeting is open to the public and will be held on **December 14, 2006, 4 pm to 6 pm, at the Mercerview Community Center, 8236 SE 24th St, Mercer Island.**

The King County Agriculture Commission meets once a month to listen to farmers, marketers, agency staff, and the public – those who strive to promote and maintain local agriculture or who have proposals that may affect agricultural lands. They directly advise those who come to them or write letters advising the Executive and Council from their collective perspective.

The fifteen Commissioners include producers from different types of agriculture and areas of the County, and representatives from marketing or advocacy groups. Since its inception in 1995, the Commission's bragging rights include helping stimulate an additional 25 neighborhood markets (from 4), initiating the Puget Sound Fresh Program, and successfully defending the original zoning of agricultural lands and farms for which development rights have been purchased. The latter is not an easy task in a rapidly growing metropolitan area!

According to the Commission's county staff liaison Claire Dyckman, the Commissioners look forward to discussing control of both noxious and invasive weeds with the Board. In addition to the conventional weed control on agricultural lands, the Commission is concerned about drainage maintenance which is exacerbated by reed canary grass and other aquatic invasives, and about weed control on the river and stream enhancement projects that many farmers are undertaking.

State Weed Board Adds Three New Plants to Noxious Weed List

Every year, the Washington State Noxious Weed Board reviews the State Weed List and considers proposals to add, remove or change the regional control requirements of weed species impacting the state. At its recent November Meeting, the Board added three new plants to the State Weed List for 2007: **common fennel** (*Foeniculum vulgare*, except the bulbing variety *azoricum*), **spurge laurel** (*Daphne laureola*), and **yellow archangel** (*Lamium galeobdolon*). The first two are Class B weeds and the third is a Class C weed, but none of them are designated for control in King County. All three are garden plants that unfortunately also have the potential to cause serious impacts in the state. Our Board proposed the listing of yellow archangel due to the invasiveness we have observed in our county, especially in forested parks and ravines adjacent to residential areas or where there has been yard waste dumping. The other two plants are also occasionally found escaping in King County. Fennel is most often found in gardens or along roadsides and spurge laurel is mostly found scattered in urban parks. For more information on these new weeds and other changes to the state weed list, please visit the State Weed Board website: <http://www.nwcb.wa.gov/index.htm> and follow the link to the 2007 proposed weeds or contact Alison Halpern at the State Weed Board at (360) 902-2082 or noxiousweeds@agr.wa.gov.

At our own King County Weed Board's weed list hearing, the public and the Board will have an opportunity to consider what status these three new weeds should have on the county weed list, in addition to making any other changes to our current weed list. The King County Weed List Hearing is open to the public and will be held on **January 10, 4 pm to 6 pm, at the Mercer Island Library, 4400 88th Ave SE, Mercer Island**. Please call or email Steve Burke for more information at 206-205-6927 or steve-j.burke@metrokc.gov.

Knotweed Symposium at WSSA March Meeting in Portland

The Western Society of Weed Science is sponsoring an Invasive Knotweed Symposium to take place at the WSSWS Annual Meeting in Portland, Oregon. The program will begin on the morning of Thursday, March 15 and continue through noon on Friday, March 16. International experts John Bailey from the United Kingdom and Petr Pysek from the Czech Republic will be keynote speakers, discussing genetics and ecology of invasive knotweeds. Other experts will discuss biology, physiology, ecological impacts, and management of Japanese knotweed, giant knotweed, Bohemian knotweed, and Himalayan knotweed, a group of species that have become so problematic throughout the world. The meeting will be held at Hilton Portland & Executive Tower, 921 SW Sixth Avenue, Portland, OR. A complete agenda will be announced in late January, 2007. The registration fee is \$50 if you also attend the 2007 WSSWS annual meeting and \$75 if only attending the Knotweed Symposium. Registration includes a one-year, complementary membership to the WSSWS. Student discounts are available. To register, log on to the WSSWS website <http://www.wsweedscience.org/>. Online pre-registration is available until February 15, 2007.

Pierce County Weed Board gets a New Coordinator (and we lose a great team member)

It is with mixed feelings that I report our latest staffing news. Sean MacDougall, our state and federal lands noxious weed specialist who has been with the program since 1998, has accepted the exciting and challenging position of coordinating the Pierce County Noxious Weed Program. Sean will be replacing Tom Bertram, retiring after more than 20 years as the coordinator. Sean has a big job ahead of him filling Tom's shoes, but we are happy for him and wish him the best. Our two counties will only benefit from working even more closely on noxious weeds across our borders, so we expect to stay in close contact with Sean as he takes the helm in Pierce County.

Sean will be working with Tom this month and will take over as the coordinator in January 2007. For more information or to find out how to contact Sean after this month, please contact us at 206-296-0290 or noxious.weeds@metrokc.gov.

EPA Decision on Aquatic Pesticide Applications and NPDES Permits

According to a news release in November, the EPA issued a ruling that may impact how permits are given out for aquatic weed control. In order to make sure I get it right, I'll just include the news release here as I received it:

(Washington, D.C. - Nov. 21, 2006) The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has issued a final rule clarifying two specific circumstances in which a Clean Water Act permit is not required before pesticides are applied. The two situations are when:

- pesticides are applied directly to water to control pests, including mosquito larvae, aquatic weeds and other pests in the water
- pesticides are applied to control pests that are present over or near water where a portion of the pesticide will unavoidably be deposited to the water in order to target the pests effectively

After considering two rounds of public comments, EPA concluded that the Clean Water Act does not require permits in these two situations. "This clean water rule strengthens and streamlines efforts of public health officials and communities to control pests and invasive species while maintaining important environmental safeguards," said EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Benjamin H. Grumbles.

The Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) requires that pesticides be registered by EPA before they can be sold or distributed. Before they are registered, they must undergo extensive study and review to help ensure that, when properly used, they do not cause unreasonable adverse effects on human health and the environment. Pesticide labels contain application instructions. Applications of pesticides that violate the FIFRA labels are subject to enforcement.

The final rule replaces EPA's Interpretive Statement on the Application of Pesticides to Waters of the United States in Compliance with FIFRA, published on Feb. 1, 2005. For more information see: <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/agriculture> and <http://www.epa.gov/pesticides> or contact Virginia Garelick at (202) 564-2316 or garelick.virginia@epa.gov.

In Washington State, the Department of Ecology is reviewing the EPA's ruling but for now, according to Kelly McLain from DOE, nothing will change for the permits already out, and for those being rewritten. For more information on how this will impact aquatic weed control in King County, you can contact our aquatic weed specialist Katie Messick at 206-296-0290 or katie.messick@metrokc.gov. I will also try to provide updates in this newsletter as we find out more.